

Horn ain't dead

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 22 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1219>

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akt — 22 Feb 2001, 00:27

From: Jim Jordan <jbjordan at gnt.net>

Though I should add an amusing personal note. Wolfe has read and deeply appreciates John Clute's SF Weekly Review of RTTW.

Well, that being the case, I must bow and admit that Horn is dead and Silk lives. I was never certain, but I thought a case should be made for the Horn Lives standpoint. I'll have to rethink a few categories...

I've been staying out of most of this because (a) I have other things on my mind and (b) I don't have a copy of RTW handy to refer to. Though I am on record as one of the disappointed ones. But I can never resist Ratty:

It seems more and more repetitive to say so, but you just can't ignore the computer model that GW has been enamoured with from the start of LS. Yes, he has used dual (multiple) personalities before, as was clear with Sev, but the whole idea of uploading and downloading very palpably took his fancy at the point where the PC entered his life. So I will argue for the Horn Lives viewpoint--quite vehemently, actually. You could say that Horn's spirit was a very successful virus taking over the Silk functional operating system (body). Or some other metaphor. But it seems to me completely clear that whoever this person thinks he is at the end of the book, Horn is **still there**. He will not, cannot, be erased from the system completely. It might be like Sev being able to access Thecla or the Autarch or whomever. Or not. Somewhere in LS there is an explanation of how, after a god has possessed someone, the god is never completely erased, and this is similar.

It seems to me that, if GW should want to write another book about these people (my guess is not, because he seems so tired of them at this point--but you never know). it will be important to the plot to have the dual Silk/Horn interface. Like having Windows and Linux on the same machine.

-alga

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Adam Stephanides — 25 Feb 2001, 20:59 · follows akt

alga wrote:

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[snip]

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for the Horn Lives viewpoint--quite vehemently, actually. You could say
that Horn's spirit was a very successful virus taking over the Silk
functional operating system (body). Or some other metaphor. But it seems
to me completely clear that whoever this person thinks he is at the end
of the book, Horn is **still there**. He will not, cannot, be erased from
the system completely.

It's not clear to me why you regard the computer model as conclusive evidence that Horn lives.
It's quite possible to completely purge an invading virus (or operating system, or whatever)
from a computer it's infected.

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or the Autarch or whomever. Or not. Somewhere in LS there is an
explanation of how, after a god has possessed someone, the god is never
completely erased, and this is similar.

While it's not a direct refutation of your point, I don't believe that the Silk-Horn situation is
equivalent to possession or to the Severian-Thecla situation (or to the Windows-Linux metaphor
you used later). There's no evidence that two separate personalities coexist in Silk's body which
can manifest themselves independently. Rather, what seems to be going on is that Silk and
Horn's personalities have merged into the single entity I, and others, have been calling Silkhorn.

As to your main point, I think we should draw a distinction between memory and spirit
(simplifying Dan'l's excellent post). I am quite willing to accept that Silk retains Horn's
memories, although I there's no direct evidence for this. But as for spirit, while I am far from
having a clear understanding of what's going on, I am going to take the appearance of
Silkhorn's astral body as a definitive indicator, unless somebody has a better alternative. And,
going by that, Horn's spirit does depart at some point before the astral trip to "bring Scylla
home."

--Adam

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